


# Horrors That Echo Through the Ages

Text Type: Encyclopedia entry  
Suggested finishing time: 25 mins

Let's think! 

1. Do you believe in luck? Why or why not?
2. Is there anything you are afraid of?



The topic sentence of paragraph 1 briefly introduces the theme 'superstitions' by pointing out that superstitions have existed for a very long time. Then, the writer develops the topic further by relating it to modern society.

Superstitions, mystical beliefs, have been around for centuries thanks to the fact that people had misunderstanding of science and showed respect for fate and fear of the unknown supernatural. Though the word 'superstition' is often  
5 associated with some religious practices of the minority, there are still many people who believe in unproven superstitions.

## More to Take Away

In Chicago, many buildings do not have the 13<sup>th</sup> floor on elevator button panels due to the fear of the number '13'. As a result, the button for the 13<sup>th</sup> floor is usually skipped to '14' or displayed as '12B'.

In many western countries, Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>, with two symbols of bad luck rolled into one, is considered 'Black Friday', the cursed day. The thought may have originated from the Bible, as Adam and Eve were banished from the  
10 Garden of Eden on an ominous Friday; and Judas, who betrayed Jesus, being the 13<sup>th</sup> guest to show up, uninvited, at the Last Supper, made '13' an unwelcome number. In recorded history, Buckingham Palace was once bombed on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> in 1940. The uneasiness stemming from the date has never seemed to weaken, not in the slightest. In 1993, according to a study published in the *British Medical Journal*, some have  
15 genuinely dreaded driving or going out on this day, and stayed home instead to keep themselves safe from any possible misfortune.

Another superstition that has diffused in the community since ancient times concerns broken mirrors, which are widely tagged to a curse of seven  
20 years of ill luck to the person who breaks a mirror. This belief came from a Roman myth that mirrors, possessing the same magical powers as water does, can foresee the future and reflect the actual soul of a person. It is believed that the soul, as the mirror  
25 is smashed to bits, would have gone astray from the body and stuck in the shards of the mirror, and misfortune would come along, until the body and soul reunite after seven years.



In the coal mining industry, whenever there is death on duty, it is the custom for miners to place the shoes of the late miner on the table as a gesture of respect. Such a belief lingers on particularly in Northern England. Workers there in earlier times used to possess only one pair of work boots, which were what served to identify a person without seeing the actual body. Nowadays, some people would still be alarmed when they see someone's shoes on the table, for fear that it may lead to one's departure of life. As in other cases,<sup>1</sup>people consider placing shoes on a table when there is no death an act of tempting fate, and believe it would invite death to their house.

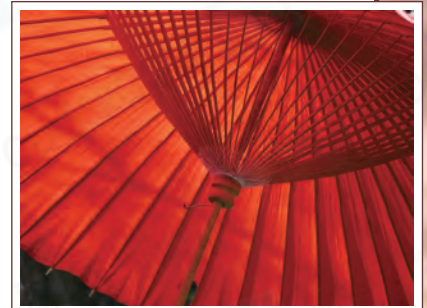


Since time immemorial,<sup>2</sup>opening an umbrella indoors is deemed inappropriate in many parts of the world. In ancient Egyptian society, umbrellas were seen as holy tools used only by nobles when the sun was out. What filled people then with dread was that using them indoors, away from the sun, would offend the sun god.<sup>3</sup>Back to the Far East, the Chinese, not any less superstitious than their Egyptian counterparts, tended to think that opening an umbrella would offend no one, but attract the ghosts nearby to the shade of the open umbrella instead. Like most superstitions, this uncanny belief, still wired in many, remains inexplicable by science, yet greatly influential.

~520 words

Read paragraphs 4 and 5.  
Which of the following statements is TRUE?

- Examine each option's validity by underlining relevant ideas in the passage.
- A. <sup>1</sup>Not placing shoes on the table may invite death. (opposite meaning ➤ ✗)
- B. It is a tradition for miners to gather for dinner every night. (idea not found ➤ ✗)
- C. <sup>2</sup>In many places, people tend not to open umbrellas indoors. (same meaning ➤ ✓)
- D. <sup>3</sup>The Ancient Chinese are far more superstitious than the ancient Egyptians. (opposite meaning ➤ ✗)



### Moral

Every individual has his or her own beliefs. Some may believe in superstitions while some may not. We should respect what others have chosen to believe in.

### Looking into Grammar

Articles are not used before certain proper nouns. Note that names of people (*Alan, Carol*), cities (*Hong Kong, Paris*), languages (*Cantonese, Spanish*), and academic subjects (*English Language, Mathematics*) are examples.

✗ I love the museums in the London better than those in the Perth.

✓ I love the museums in London better than those in Perth.

? Circle TWO proper nouns not used with an article in lines 12-16.

## Part A Multiple Choice Questions

Answer the following questions based on the information provided in the encyclopedia entry. Choose the best answer by blackening the appropriate circle.



1. According to paragraph 1, people tend to believe in superstitions, especially those who \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. are interested in science
- B. have religious beliefs
- C. are familiar with science
- D. believe in gods and ghosts

2. People's fear towards Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> has \_\_\_\_\_ since 1940.

- A. slightly weakened
- B. shown no signs of weakening
- C. been drastically aggravated
- D. has worsened a bit

2 Locate the specific information, that is, the year, and read the sentences before and after for answers.

3. In line 20, the word 'ill' means \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. very bad
- B. very good
- C. feeling unwell
- D. sickness-causing



4. According to paragraph 4, which of the following is TRUE?

- A. No miners accidentally died at work.
- B. Miners always place their work shoes on the table.
- C. People identified miners by looking at their boots.
- D. People respect the deceased miners by putting their shoes on the table.

4 Read the paragraph again and eliminate the wrong options one by one.

5. In many regions of the world, an unfurled umbrella indoors is considered \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. bizarre...influential
- B. infectious...provocative
- C. improper...offensive
- D. dreadful...unscientific

6. Based on Chinese beliefs, an open umbrella might \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. attract gods to the hot rays of the sun
- B. offend ghosts in its shade
- C. attract ghosts to its shade
- D. protect gods from the hot rays of the sun

### Self-evaluation Checklist (✓/✗)

- |  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| 1. I understood most of the information provided in the passage.                         | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. I guessed the meaning of unknown words or phrases correctly.                          | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. I managed to answer questions by drawing inferences.                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. I identified and understood the writer's / characters' feelings.                      | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. I could identify and summarise the main idea of the passage.                          | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. The two reading strategies taught in this module enabled me to read more effectively. | <input type="checkbox"/> |

## Part B Pre-HKDSE Questions

Answer the following questions based on the information provided in the encyclopedia entry. For question 5, answer in a complete sentence.



1. Match the subheadings below to the corresponding paragraphs in the encyclopedia entry. Write the correct numbers in the boxes.

(i) Off the table

(ii) Shades unlike trees'

(iii) Soul draining

(iv) 'Doomsday'



2. Which of the following is NOT true?

- A. Superstitions have influenced many since hundreds of years ago.
- B. It is believed that mirrors have supernatural powers.
- C. No superstitions came from the Bible.
- D. Ancient Romans believed they could predict the future through water.

3. In line 40, 'an act of tempting fate' means \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. an unlucky event in one's life
- B. a stupid act which changes nothing in our lives
- C. a silly act that involves risks and danger
- D. a traditional way to deal with a serious problem

3 Read the sentences before and after the line.

4. Look for words in the encyclopedia entry to match the definitions below.

- |                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| (i) _____ (para. 3)   | (v.) spread in many directions   |
| (ii) _____ (para. 4)  | (v.) remains existent although often fading in strength, importance or influence |
| (iii) _____ (para. 5) | (adj.) incapable of being explained  |

4 Pay attention to the keywords in the definitions.

5. Why are superstitions considered mystical and uncanny?

### DSE Level Up

Q2 In the paragraphs mentioned, look for words that carry similar meanings to the following keywords in the options. Then see if the statements match the ideas in the passage.

- (i) hundreds of years → \_\_\_\_\_ (para. 1)    (ii) came from → \_\_\_\_\_ (para. 2)  
(iii) supernatural → \_\_\_\_\_ (para. 3)    (iv) predict → \_\_\_\_\_ (para. 3)

## Part C Vocabulary Bank

Label the photos below with the symbols of superstitions from the word box.

phobia      raven      jade      peony  
 broken mirror      black cat      clover      lucky charm



1. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_



2. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_



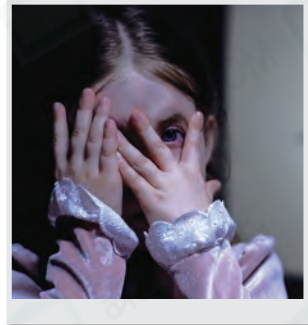
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_



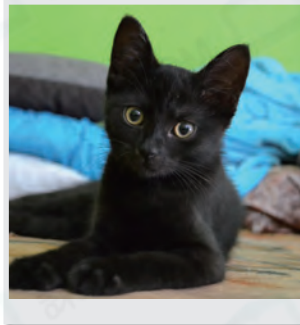
4. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_



5. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_



6. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_



7. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_



8. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

### Word Craft

The suffix **-phobia** is used to construct words that describe irrationally strong fear or dislike of something.

- e.g.** techn**phobia** (=the dislike of new technology)  
 aer**phobia** (=the fear of flying)  
 soci**phobia** (=the fear or dislike of social gatherings)

### Let's Discuss!

1. What brings you good luck? What do you do to avoid bad luck?
2. Do you think the Chinese or the westerners are more superstitious?

**Reminder**

Change the nouns to their plural form when needed.

**Part D Cloze Passage**

Complete the online discussion below with the appropriate nouns introduced on the previous page.

<b>Discussion: Do you believe in superstitions?</b>	
<p><b>MC</b> Miss Claire</p>	<p>Hi, boys and girls. I got trapped in the lift this morning on the 14<sup>th</sup> floor of the building I live in. That was so creepy! Do you know of any other superstitions? Share with us here and let us know what you think about them!</p>
<p><b>AL</b> Aaron Lee</p>	<p>Hi everyone. I've believed in a superstition for more than 10 years. When I was four years old, my grandma gave me a (1) _____ bracelet, which I'm still wearing every day. I didn't like it at first but my mum told me that it has the power to protect me from evil forces. From then on, I've never taken it off.</p>
<p><b>EI</b> Emma Ip</p>	<p>Most superstitions are just grandiose myths! I've heard one about how (2) _____ bring bad luck to people by walking across in front of them. I have one at home and I'm more than fine.</p>
<p><b>JH</b> Jacob Ho</p>	<p>I can't agree with you more, Emma. I know some people think (3) _____ are also a symbol of bad luck because they are the 'messengers' of the dead (because they're black and can fly?).</p>
<p><b>LW</b> Luke Wong</p>	<p>Ha-ha! I think it's rather silly to see animals as ominous only because of how they look and sound. Isn't the (4) _____ of the number '4' a more reasonable superstition? What's scarier than mispronouncing the number in Chinese?</p>
<p><b>AK</b> Ann Kwong</p>	<p>I believe there must be a reason why these 'bad luck superstitions' have been around for so long. Whatever the reason, I don't care about them, as I only believe in the 'good luck' ones. Last year, my baby brother threw a marble ball at the mirror, making it a notorious (5) '_____'. I betted nothing bad would happen after that and I was right.</p>
<p><b>MW</b> Marcia Wu</p>	<p>Ann, I'd then suggest you grow some (6) _____ in pots at home if you like large flowers. I once read in a book about how they can bring happiness and good fortune! If you are not a fan of plants, you may get yourself a (7) _____ instead, such as a rabbit foot keychain!</p>
<p><b>AT</b> Austin Tam</p>	<p>I think Luke has made a good point about animals and bad luck. Ravens are born black and there's no dispute over it, so it's unfair to consider their presence a sign of bad luck. However, some superstitions about plants are based on probability—like the one about (8) _____. It's much fairer to relate success in finding one with four leaves to good luck!</p>